
THE MAN AND THE LAND.

SACRIFICE AND TRUE GLORY.



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REMARKS OF JOS. B. CUMMING AT THE REUNION OF THE SUR-
VIVORS OF THE FIFTH GEORGIA REGIMENT, AT AUGUSTA,
AUGUST 30, 1883.

MY COMRADES: It has been given out through the press that I was to make an address to you today. The little I might have to say has been heralded by the high-sounding title of "oration." I am sorry that anything of this sort has been done. It may have aroused expectations which I cannot satisfy. I have prepared neither address nor oration. I have had neither time nor inclination for either. I hasten to remove any wrong impression which this last expression may make. Of course, I do not mean to say that I am not glad we have met again, or that I altogether regret we have survived. I mean only that I have a poor opinion of "speechifying" at all times, and especially at a reunion of men, who were originally assembled for deeds, not words. The men of words, as such, were entirely out of place in those days, and men of action were demanded by the exigencies of the hour. Speech is a plentiful commodity at all time in this country—utterly worthless in such times as we are here to commemorate, and entirely too cheap even in the piping times of peace. The word "address" is painfully suggestive to my mind of weary and bored audiences, and "oration" conjures up at once the conventional Fourth of July celebration, the glories of which have perceptibly waned in these latter times. Please dismiss all apprehension of either of these nuisances. Five minutes will cover all the time I shall abstract from the pleasanter occupations of the hour. The talk, which used to run from mouth to mouth around the camp fire, the humor and the jest,

which enlivened the bivouac, the light-hearted chat, which no weariness of the march, no shortness of rations, no heat, no cold, no imminence of deadly conflict could suppress—these be the appropriate occupations of this occasion; and an oration would be as much out of place as used to be the occasional black beaver hat, that wandered unwarily into a Confederate camp, and a general outcry of “Fold up that oration,” would not be less appropriate than our old familiar slogan, “Come down out of that stove-pipe.”

But it seems that I am expected to say something, and if I am to speak, too many solemn shadows rise before me as I turn my face to the past—the camp, the battle field—for me to be tempted into levity by the reminiscence of an old jest current in every Confederate camp. I shall endeavor to present a few serious thoughts; but, in doing so, I shall not attempt to play the historian and speak of foughten fields, however proud as a Fifth Georgia man I may be of those memories. I prefer to contemplate the moral, the spiritual, the sentimental aspects of those tremendous times.

Do I not voice the feeling of every Confederate heart, or do I only speak for myself, when I say that that period of my life is the one with which I am most nearly satisfied? I take my own career as that of the average Confederate soldier—nothing brilliant, nothing dazzling in it; but a persistent, steady effort to do my duty—an effort persevered in in the midst of privation, hardship and danger. If ever I was unselfish, it was then. If ever I was capable of self-denial, it was then. If ever I was able to trample on self-indulgence, it was then. If ever I was strong to make sacrifices, even unto death, it was in those days. And if I were called upon to say on the peril of my soul when it lived its highest life, when it was least faithless to true manhood, when it was most loyal to the best part of man's nature, I would answer: “In those days when I followed yon bullet-pierced flag through its shifting fortunes of victory and defeat.”

I believe this would be the sentiment of every true Confederate. And what I say of the Confederate soldier is true also of

the land he fought for. Those will be noted—whether we consider all the past, or in imagination scan all the future—as the days of its greatest glory. Not the glory merely of victories of inferior over superior forces, or of triumphs won by the weak from the strong; but the glory of devotion and sacrifice. The bright sky above us will doubtless in the years to come look down on this country and see it far richer than now—its hamlets grown into towns, its villages into cities, primeval forests changed into fruitful fields, its natural resources converted into accumulated wealth, its population multiplied manifold. But if beyond and above this bending sky there resides an Eternal Intelligence, that regards the lands through all ages, and measures the nations by other standards than those of wealth and success, it will note that the time of this Southern land's true glory will not be those coming days of wealth and teeming millions; but that time has been, and was when its cities were in ashes, its fields were wasted, each home a house of mourning, and the smoke and the blood of sacrifice covered the land.

I know that such sentiments as I have been uttering are not altogether popular and fashionable in these latter times. It has come to be considered the proper thing to “shake hands across the bloody chasm,” whatever that high-sounding ceremony may be, and to “fraternize,” though this latter performance seems to be fatally associated with a great deal of sentimental twaddle. Well, let them shake if they choose, there is no law against shaking; let them fraternize if they will—how beautiful it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. But I take leave to believe, or at least to hope, that the sentiments current on such occasions have their fountain in the convivial punch bowl, rather than in the loyal Confederate heart; and I trust that on future occasions, however much Southern men may appreciate courtesies, and though the proprieties of the hour may impose reticence of their real feelings, no expressions will be used to discredit this sentiment, which is, or ought to be, in every loyal Confederate heart, viz: The North is rich and powerful, but the South won greater victories than did the North, and made sac-

rifices of which the North not even dreamed. We are not ashamed, but we are proud, and if we have tears to shed they are not tears of repentance for our sins.

Well, we have survived. This fact seems to be sufficiently apparent. How many men, as good, as true, as brave, as worthy to live as we, have we survived! It would be the conventionally proper thing to say we will drop a tear to their memory. I have no such phrase to use, nor any other which assumes as a necessary fact that there is advantage in survival. How many a sailor has ridden out the storm only to meet tidings of death and desolation in the port! How many of us, recalling some time and place of deadly peril, where we had made up our minds that we must fall, have not felt at times that it would have been better for us to have sunk then and there into a soldier's grave! Who will be so presumptuous as to say, when he recalls some comrade falling by his side, that the bullet, which stretched him on the field, was not his truest friend, clothing him then and there with imperishable honor, and providing him a lasting refuge from unnumbered ills, from deadly sorrow! If I should use words of pity for those honorable departed, doubtless more hearts than one among us would protest that envy, not pity, was the word. But whether pity or envy, certainly HONOR—honor from the survivors to those whom they survived.

